



OWASP

Nominet Best Practice Challenge 2008

Briefing given at OWASP London on 24th July 2008 by Colin Watson

Nominet, the Internet registry for .uk domain names, initiated a best practice challenge in 2007 to identify examples of creativity and innovation in the use of the internet and showcased these at the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Rio de Janeiro last year. Do to the success of the idea, the challenge was run again in 2008 with six categories:

- best development project award
- best security initiative award
- raising the industry standards award
- personal safety online award
- internet for all award
- open internet award.

In April, OWASP London described to enter OWASP into the best security initiative category.

1 Submission

Ivan Ristic drafted and submitted a compelling proposal:

Executive Summary

The Internet is fast becoming the one thing we cannot live without. People are relying on Internet access for fun and education; organisations are relying on Internet access to do business. But it's not a secret that the Internet suffers from one terrible flaw: it's insecure. It's insecure because we've rushed into creating a global network of computers without making sure we knew what we were doing.

The Open Web Application Security Project (OWASP) is a global open community dedicated to enabling organizations to develop, purchase, and maintain applications that can be trusted. All of the OWASP tools, documents, forums, and chapters are free and open to anyone interested in

improving application security. We advocate approaching application security as a people, process, and technology problem,

because the most effective approaches to application security include improvements in all of these areas. We can be found at <http://www.owasp.org>.

Operating since 2001, OWASP is a network of more than 100 local chapters worldwide. More than 4000 people participate in the many projects active at any given time.

Description

OWASP was formed back in 2001, in an entirely organic fashion, when a group of security professionals came to realise how terribly insecure the way we develop our web applications was. The initial goal was deemed to be modest: write a guide for developers, which would document secure software development practices. While the initial effort was meant to last a few weeks, it came out to several hundred pages. When released, the OWASP Guide to Building Secure Web Applications was an instant success, instantly saturating the download servers. It has been downloaded in excess of 100,000 times since the first release (we've lost count).

OWASP is a place where good people gather to help increase the awareness of the web application security problems in applications. It's a grass-roots effort, with the driving force being the people who are dealing with these problems every day, and wanting to lend a hand to change the situation for the better.

OWASP has the following main areas of activity:

OWASP Wiki - this is where all OWASP members collaborate.

Projects, some of which are:

- Guide
- Top 10
- WebScarab
- WebGoat
- Testing
- Code Review Guide

Summer of Code activities - each year OWASP sponsors groups and individuals to work on projects that are related to security of web applications. The budget for the 2008 Summer of Code is US\$ 100,000, and so far 31 projects have been accepted to the programme.

Books - project that produce documentation now make it possible to purchase paper versions of the books at cost.

Local chapters - there are more than 100 chapters worldwide. Local chapters will organise a meeting every few months, where around 20 people will attend (for smaller chapters) and over 100 people.

Conferences - OWASP organises at least two conferences every year, one in the US and the other in Europe, although most years see conferences in other parts of the World, such as Asia and Australia.

The importance of OWASP is being recognised by its growing corporate membership base. OWASP has nearly 50 corporate members who are helping finance its activities.

The activities of OWASP are of special importance to the development countries, who don't necessarily have the resources to finance own security research.

Conclusion

OWASP is a new kind of organization. Our freedom from commercial pressures allows us to provide unbiased, practical, cost-effective information about application

security. OWASP is not affiliated with any technology company, although we support the informed use of commercial security technology. Similar to many open-source software projects, OWASP produces many types of materials in a collaborative, open way. The OWASP Foundation is a not-for-profit entity that ensures the project's longterm success.

2 Shortlisted entries

OWASP was shortlisted for the best security initiative category. The four shortlisted entries in this category were:

- Barclays – PINsentry authentication device
<http://www.barclays.co.uk/pinsentry/>
- BeCrypt – BeCrypt Trusted Client
<http://www.becrypt.com/>
- Business Crime Reduction Centre
<http://www.bcrc-uk.org/>
- OWASP
<http://www.owasp.org/>

The winners would be announced at a ceremony in the Science Museum, London on 9th July 2008. The judges for the category were Louise Bennett from the British Computer Society and Richard Martin from APACS.

3 Winner

Ivan Ristic, Dinis Cruz and Colin Watson attended the ceremony on behalf of OWASP London.

The runner up was the local South Yorkshire initiative Business Crime Reduction Centre which the judges hoped could be a model for other police forces across the country.

The winner of the category was Barclays for their PINsentry device which had addressed a real problem, cut banking fraud dramatically and building trust in online financial services.

Although OWASP did not win, the judges praised the project for its openness, democratic approach and its international awareness programme. However, contacts

were made with members of other UK information security organisations. Many other attendees had not previously been aware of OWASP at all and were surprised about the scale of the project and its open community.

The OWASP London group felt that the award nomination was good for the promotion of OWASP, even if they did not necessarily agree with the judges decisions.

4 References and further reading

1. Nominet Best Practice Challenge

<http://www.nominet.org.uk/about/bestpracticechallenge/>

2. Best Practice Challenge Award Photographs

<http://www.nominet.org.uk/about/bestpracticechallenge/awards/>

3. Best Practice Challenge Winners Booklet

http://www.nominet.org.uk/digitalAssets/30167_Best_Practice_Challenge_winners_booklet.pdf